A youth entrepreneurship strategy for British Columbia

Getting BC's Youth Into Business

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the past several years, numerous studies have been completed addressing the need for, and importance of, programs and services that promote youth entrepreneurship. Included among these studies is the *Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Youth Entrepreneurship* – designed to provide direction for the delivery of federal programs and services.

This strategy represents a "made in BC" approach to coordinate the activities and direction of federal, provincial and non-profit organizations in the delivery of youth entrepreneurship programs and services.

Recognizing that "youth entrepreneurship" encompasses a range of government programs and services, the BC Youth Entrepreneur Development (YED) Partnership set out to develop a "made in BC" youth entrepreneurship strategy. Neither exclusively a federal nor provincial strategy, the strategy was viewed as an instrument to provide a common direction for all organizations involved in the delivery of youth entrepreneurship programs and services. Irrespective of whether the organizations are associated with federal, provincial or non-profit organizations, this strategy is intended as "blueprint" for the future design, delivery and coordination of youth entrepreneurship programs and services for current and potential young entrepreneurs throughout British Columbia.

...youth represent 15% of BC's labour force yet account for more than one-quarter (28%) of all unemployed British Columbians...

The results of the research suggest that there is a definite need for a youth entrepreneurship strategy. In the midst of industry re-structuring, corporate downsizing and the growing importance of the "new economy", entrepreneurship offers additional opportunities for youth to participate more actively in BC's economic growth and diversification. Labour market data suggests that BC youth, in particular, have been adversely affected by such industry re-structuring. In the first seven months of 2000, the youth unemployment rate has been double that of older workers; and while youth comprise only 15% of BC's total labour force, they account for more than one-quarter (28%) of all unemployed British Columbians.

Given the current difficulties faced by BC youth, promotion of entrepreneurship as a viable career option assumes an even greater importance. To support youth entrepreneurship, there needs to be a coordinated "vision" or strategy to guide youth

entrepreneurship in British Columbia.

...the *Strategy* reflects the views and opinions of a diverse group of stakeholders.

This document reflects the input of hundreds of young entrepreneurs, service providers, government agencies and non-profit organizations. Participants came from a range of occupations and backgrounds from both the private and public sector. Irrespective of the organization, all individuals interviewed were unanimous in their opinion that a "youth entrepreneurship strategy" would be an important step in enhancing the provision of programs and services to BC's young entrepreneurs.

Many of the recommendations represent a new way of co-ordinating and delivering youth entrepreneurship programs and services.

The developed strategy identified in this document reflects a range of opinions and proposals from diverse stakeholders. Not all recommendations reflect a consensus among youth or service providers – the recommendations do, however, represent an alternative to current practices with respect to the promotion and provision of youth entrepreneurship programs and services in British Columbia.

Examined in the *Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy* are eight key areas or issues, including:

- Youth Entrepreneurship as a Career Option
- Co-ordination of Services
- Access and Awareness of Programs and Services
- The Role of the Education System
- Gaps in Service Delivery
- Sectoral Partnerships
- Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Youth
- Provision of Specialized Services for Specific Youth Groups

Responsibility for implementing recommendations has not always been explicitly identified in the strategy.

In addressing these issues, the *Strategy* also includes numerous recommendations or "action items." While responsibility for some action items has been explicitly addressed, it remains incumbent upon some organizations and agencies to implement those recommendations for which they are responsible.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Strategy* reflects the desire to enhance the co-ordination and delivery of youth entrepreneurship programs and services across British Columbia.

In recognition of the need to develop a comprehensive and co-ordinated strategy to enhance the opportunity for youth entrepreneurship in British Columbia, the Youth Entrepreneur Development (YED) Partnership – consisting of representatives from the federal and provincial governments, non-profit agencies and the private sector – commissioned this study to identify key challenges facing young entrepreneurs, as well as to identify a framework that would enhance entrepreneurship among BC's youth.

To this end, the YED Partnership contracted with R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to facilitate and co-ordinate the development of a *Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy for British Columbia*. The mandate of this research was as follows:

The *Strategy* encompasses activities to promote awareness of, and participation in, entrepreneurship activities among BC youth.

- to consult with youth, service providers and funding agencies to identify and assess key barriers facing youth in terms of starting and managing their own businesses;
- to identify "gaps" in service delivery as well as areas of overlap and duplication of services provided to young entrepreneurs;
- to identify "best practices" in the provision of programs and services that support youth entrepreneurship;
- to develop a strategy that would both increase participation of youth in entrepreneurial activities as well as support the viable start-up of youth businesses;
- to provide recommendations as to how governments, the private sector and other organizations could better support youth entrepreneurship in British Columbia.

The *Strategy* was developed on the basis of extensive consultation with youth, service providers, funding agencies and other "partner" agencies.

The Research Process

Development of the strategy and recommendations was based on an extensive consultation process. The various activities completed in developing this framework included:

- a review of past studies, program evaluations, and research completed with respect to youth entrepreneurship;
- a telephone survey of young entrepreneurs from all regions of BC;
- a scan of youth entrepreneurship programs offered throughout BC;
- consultation with service providers, funding agencies, education institutions and other service delivery agencies;
- focus groups with service providers and youth;
- three "roundtables" held in Victoria, Vancouver and Prince George to review the proposed framework and seek consensus on the key issues and recommendations.

Specific attention was given to obtaining the input of Aboriginal youth, service providers and delivery agencies

In addition to canvassing the opinion of a representative cross-section of young entrepreneurs, service providers and other key informants, a key element of the strategy was to examine the needs and requirements of the Aboriginal community. To this end, the Consultant completed several activities to ensure that the Strategy reflected the issues and concerns of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and service providers, including:

- telephone survey of Aboriginal youth (40 of the 279 youth surveyed were of Aboriginal descent);
- in-person/telephone interviews with approximately 20 Aboriginal service providers/key informants;
- site visit to Aboriginal service provider to conduct focus groups with service providers and Aboriginal youth entrepreneurs.

While many of the recommendations are applicable to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, specific issues associated with the design and delivery of youth

entrepreneurship programs targeting Aboriginal youth are addressed in Section 7 of this report.

More than 400 individuals provided input into the development of this *Strategy*.

This document represents the input and synthesis of a considerable volume of information gained from interviews and feedback. The Consultant would like to thank the more than 400 individuals throughout the province who participated in this research process.

BACKGROUND

Entrepreneurship represents an important component in BC's efforts to diversify its economy.

Entrepreneurship, especially among young people, is an important part of economic growth and diversification for the province of BC. The depletion of natural resources, the pace of technological change and the increasing globalization of commodities markets have led the province to experience challenges now as never before. BC's youth need to be adaptable and self-reliant.

The youth of the province face significant challenges as they struggle to make a living in this "new economy". Programming and support in entrepreneurship not only helps youth to start businesses; it can assist them in becoming more self-confident and aware of their strengths through active participation in the development and maintenance of new ideas and solutions to existing problems. Importantly, it also provides transferable skills young people can use as employees or as entrepreneurs. The overall result is, potentially, a firmer economic footing for this group and better health and well-being for the community as a whole.

While youth represent only 15% of BC's labour force, unemployed youth account for approximately 28% of the total number of unemployed workers in the province during the first seven months of 2000.

Youth Entrepreneurship is especially important in the context of providing economic opportunities to target populations that have had difficulty in securing employment in an economy subject to rationalization, change and re-structuring. For example, youth[1] unemployment in British Columbia remains well above that of the general population: during the first seven months of 2000, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 24 years (12.5%) was double that of workers aged 25 years of age or older (6.0%). While youth represent only 15.4% of BC's total labour force, youth aged 15 to 24 years accounted for more than one-quarter (28%) of all unemployed workers in the first seven months of 2000.

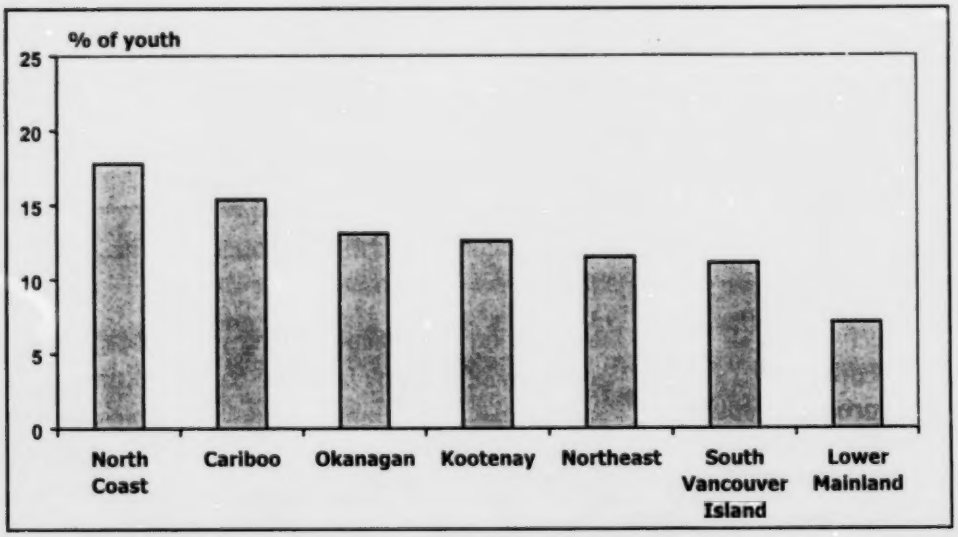
Economic opportunities available to youth are particularly problematic in regions outside of Southern Vancouver Island

[1] For data presented in this section, youth are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 to 24 years. For the youth entrepreneurship strategy, youth are defined as individuals aged between 15 and 30 years of age.

Youth living outside of the Lower Mainland are almost twice as likely to be on EI/IA than young people residing in the Lower Mainland.

and the Lower Mainland – areas in which traditional resource-based employment is no longer an option for many of the young people residing in these regions. As a result of poor employment prospects in many traditional resource-dependent communities, the proportion of youth receiving unemployment insurance or income assistance is markedly higher than that of youth living in the Lower Mainland or Southern Vancouver Island. As highlighted in Chart 1, the proportion of youth receiving EI/IA benefits in regions outside of the Lower Mainland is almost twice that of Lower Mainland youth. Continued uncertainty with respect to many resource industries suggests that regional youth unemployment will remain an issue for the next several years. The challenge for these single-industry communities is to diversify their economic base so that the region's economy is not dependent on any one industry, but is equally fueled by the operations of multiple, mostly independent industries.

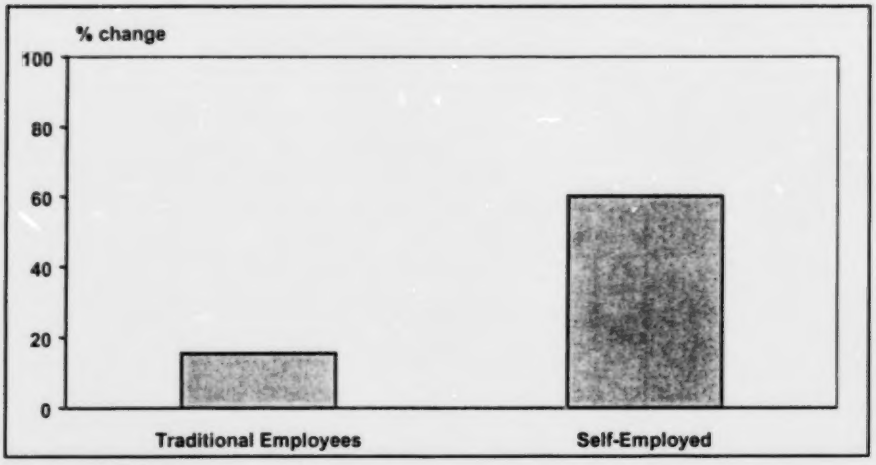
Chart 1
Proportion of Youth on EI/IA by Region
December 1999



During the last decade, the number of self-employed workers in BC has increased by 60%.

In addition to providing employment alternatives for BC youth, providing young adults with the skills to start and manage their own business would reflect the importance of self-employment in BC's economy. During the past decade, the number of self-employed workers in BC increased by more than 60% – more than four times the growth in the number of individuals working for private and public sector employers. While self-employed individuals represent only a low proportion of the total BC workforce (21% in 1999), during the past ten years, this employment category has increased considerably faster than employment in "traditional" organizations.

Chart 2
Growth in Self-Employed vs "Traditional" Employees
1990-1999



Source: BC Stats

Failure to promote youth entrepreneurship has implications for the provincial economy and local communities.

Recognizing the difficulty facing youth obtaining traditional employment in many resource-based industries, a youth entrepreneurship strategy represents a pro-active approach to provide youth with the opportunity to participate in BC's economic growth and development, both now and in the future. Failure to promote entrepreneurship opportunities for BC youth would not only compromise their ability to participate and contribute to provincial economic development, but would also undermine the long-term ability of many small, resource-dependent towns to retain youth who represent future workers, consumers and families in these communities.

KEY FINDINGS – AN OVERVIEW

The *Strategy* was developed on the basis of extensive consultation with youth, service providers, government agencies and other private and public sector organizations.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy was not developed in isolation: the key issues detailed in the strategy are based on a synthesis of a considerable volume of information, including:

- review of previous research, studies and evaluations;
- a scan of existing youth entrepreneurship programs in BC;
- extensive telephone survey of over 270 young entrepreneurs;
- in-person, telephone and group interviews with more than 100 individuals associated with the design, administration, delivery and management of youth entrepreneurship programs and services;
- focus groups with youth, Aboriginal youth entrepreneurs, and service providers;
- three roundtables held in Victoria, Vancouver and Prince George.

A full listing of the participatory agencies involved in the development of this strategy is listed in Appendix A.

For the purposes of this *Strategy*, a very broad description of Entrepreneurship has been used.

The Description of "Entrepreneurship"

For the purposes of this strategy, entrepreneurship encompasses a broad range of activities, including self-employment (which may have only one primary customer or revenue source) to the operation of a business with paid employees that derive revenues from numerous clients or revenue sources. The development of the *Strategy* also encompasses a range of services/activities that could be implemented to support youth entrepreneurship throughout a "continuum" of entrepreneurship programs and services, including awareness, orientation, education and training, business conceptualization, start-up, post-start-up and business operation.

There were eight key themes or issues identified, which form the basis of the *Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy.*

In completing the study, the research team identified several key elements associated with the provision of services for young entrepreneurs. While several of these issues or themes were consistent with past studies, other issues or key themes represent new approaches in terms of the design and promotion of a youth entrepreneurship strategy.

The developed strategy incorporates eight key elements:

- Youth Entrepreneurship as a Career Option
- Co-ordination of Services
- Access and Awareness of Programs and Services
- The Role of the Education System
- Gaps in Service Delivery
- Sectoral Partnerships
- Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Youth
- Provision of Specialized Services for Specific Youth Groups

A discussion of these key issues and accompanying recommendations forms the body of the *Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy*. It should be noted that the order in which the issues are presented is not meant to reflect their relative importance.

Issue #1: Youth Entrepreneurship as a Career Option

"I think that starting a business should be seen as a legitimate form of job search . . . Presently it isn't. . . and jobs are very scarce, so this should definitely change to help promote self-employment."

Young Entrepreneur

The benefits of entrepreneurship are multivariate. Unfortunately, many sectors, including some members of the education system and the private sector, have failed to recognize the importance of youth entrepreneurship. Parents and teachers can be seen as perpetuating the notion that entrepreneurship is "risky" and not practical for the long term. They encourage youth to "get a job" without recognizing that stable, lucrative positions with pension plans are becoming increasingly rare. Parents may perpetuate this attitude by providing little support and encouragement for their children who choose self-employment. In addition, the focus of career planning included in high school curricula is on developing the skills and knowledge necessary to secure a stable, full-time job.

In the private sector, banks and other financial institutions can impose significant barriers to young people working to establish a business by refusing their applications for start-up loans and/or asking them to have a parent co-sign the loan. All of these factors contribute to the minimizing of entrepreneurship as a valid career choice and create barriers to youth interested in pursuing their own business ventures.

Businesses should ***"... provide shadow opportunities for youth to explore the variability and breadth of entrepreneurship activities."***

Career Education Coordinator

In interviews with key stakeholders and service providers, many people spoke of the importance of facilitating the development of an "entrepreneurial attitude" among youth, peers and parents. Those skills learned in the pursuit of self-employment, they said – including teamwork, research, networking and planning – are valuable to all young people. However, many young entrepreneurs still experience a lack of credibility in the business community, and pervasive stereotypes exist around the choice of entrepreneurship as being a questionable venture. One service provider who was interviewed referred to the importance of educating the parents so that they "embrace and support" entrepreneurial activities as "a viable option". In this way, "youth will choose it more readily".

Many of the youth surveyed indicated that the educational system, both K-12 and post-secondary, should be used more as a method of channeling information to youth about entrepreneurship as a viable career option. For example, one youth suggested that entrepreneurial programs be made eligible for high school credit. Businesses or the business community could become more involved by promoting the "entrepreneurial mindset", not only among youth, but in the community as well. Several participants noted that it was important for the business community to encourage youth participation in local business activities, as many young entrepreneurs felt intimidated and "out of place" in traditional business networking structures such as Chamber of Commerce "business mixers", trade shows and industry conferences.

". . .most of the youth we see have parents who were in business for themselves. The issue is to get the message out to other parents/ youth who do not come from an entrepreneurial background . . ."

Service Provider

Numerous stakeholders noted that the concept of entrepreneurism needed to become more pervasive in the "culture" of the province. Service providers often noted that many youth involved in entrepreneurship came from families who had established and/or managed a business. While such youth were natural candidates for entrepreneurship, a key challenge was gaining the recognition and support of the broader community – including youth, parents, teachers, businesses and government agencies – of the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial environment in British Columbia.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1-1 All organizations that provide education, employment and/or other training services to youth need to review their programs and services to reflect the awareness and importance of youth entrepreneurship as a viable option for BC youth. Design and delivery of such programs should incorporate this review through a "youth entrepreneurship lens".

1-2 Develop a co-ordinated marketing plan which encompasses federal, provincial and non-profit organizations:

- **identifying the role of youth entrepreneurship in BC's "new economy", particularly the importance of youth entrepreneurship in economic development.**
- **advocating for the support of young people in their pursuit of the development of the skills, knowledge and attitudes conducive to successful self-employment.**

The development of an "entrepreneurial attitude" should be portrayed as being applicable to all careers, rather than depicting it as germane only for those who open a business;

- ☐ There should be a focus at all levels of elementary and secondary school on increasing the awareness of entrepreneurship as a career option, as well as emphasizing the role of entrepreneurship in numerous occupations (e.g., dentists, accountants, lawyers, etc.);
- ☐ The private sector should be a key player in both developing this marketing plan and serving as a major target group. For instance, the plan may encourage businesses to provide co-op-type experiences for young people, so that youths receive a "hands-on" introduction to entrepreneurship;
- ☐ Parents should be another key target group of this marketing plan.

1-3 The private sector must be encouraged to participate and support youth entrepreneurship. The business community (e.g., BC Chamber of Commerce) needs to take a proactive approach to supporting youth, in the form of mentorship and even corporate sponsorship of young entrepreneurs in trade shows, business mixers and conferences.

Issue #2: Co-ordination of Services

Most stakeholders agreed that there are a number of high quality programs available to young people, but these programs often lack direction and leadership. As queried by one service provider in focus group discussions, "Everyone is out there delivering programs, but are they communicating with each other?".

"If young people are shuffled from program to program, you will lose their interest."

Program Coordinator

One example of lack of co-ordination in service provision is apparent on the internet, a major information resource for youth. Many websites both introduce entrepreneurship and advertise available programs. These sites, however, are not well linked. Therefore, young people who log on to different sites may end up receiving very different types of information. This makes it difficult to identify the types of service needed and to access those services in their communities.

"There should be a year-round, dedicated coordinator . . . a resource person . . .[who] works in a community youth career or employment centre."

Service Providers Focus Group

Youth entrepreneurship programs and services tend to be poorly co-ordinated at all levels. There is some concern that youth entrepreneurship is not a priority within certain government ministries or departments, which has fostered additional fragmentation in service delivery. Also, there is some overlap in services, particularly in the case of federally and provincially funded programs. Much of this overlap lies in the area of programs/services to assist in business start-up. Most key stakeholders stated that the services available in this area are not well structured and are poorly tied to one another. For instance, in some cases stakeholders and service providers are unaware of each other's programs and few have found opportunities to work together. In some communities, service providers working to implement federally funded programs work in parallel with those who provide provincially funded programs. Although these sets of programs are frequently very similar in terms of program content and delivery, the two groups rarely interact.

Some service providers cited a feeling of competition among those who must administer and deliver programs in BC communities; co-ordination becomes difficult when all are competing for the same

pool of limited resources. There is currently little incentive to partner at local or provincial levels.

"There's a vision, but not everyone is clear as to how that vision is supposed to be unfolded."

Independent Service Provider

A policy framework such as the *Strategy* will help to provide some structure and leadership to provincial planning. However, it is also important to allow each community the opportunity to identify strengths and address local needs. In particular, there is a need for programs in rural, Aboriginal and Northern sectors that reflect the requirements of the community. There may be resistance from regional service providers to existing federal or provincial programs which are perceived as a "cookie-cutter" approach. Several service providers say federal and provincial programs need to understand that what works in one region may not fit the interests, lifestyles and demographics of another region.

"Base programs on what youth want and in a structure that works for them, not what you think they need."

Program Coordinator

In some communities, service providers have begun a collaborative process to co-ordinate the local youth entrepreneurship system of service delivery. For example, service providers in the Kelowna area have formed a team and see themselves as having successfully completed "the first lap of the race". Communities such as these could share their experiences and provide guidance elsewhere in the province.

Generally, youth respondents felt that current programs did not provide a continuum of service in that they are too short, general and expensive. Although youth are seeking specific, comprehensive and "hands-on" training, they are receiving "general survey" courses that do not lead them directly into entrepreneurship.

The routine input of youth is required in order to facilitate the inclusion of programming and policy development most geared to the perspectives and daily lives of young entrepreneurs. Youth may feel more comfortable with programs that include youth in design and delivery. As one service provider said, "[Youth] have their own language". Programs must also be seen as easily approachable. Several respondents said that youth feel intimidated by programs offered in government buildings. Especially in rural and Aboriginal communities, youth may not feel comfortable in what they perceive to be a formal environment.

Active involvement of young people at all levels of planning and service delivery will reflect the needs of this group more accurately.

Numerous stakeholders and service delivery agencies noted the need to develop communication and information from the "grassroots up". Regional service delivery agencies, while noting the importance of better provincial co-ordination of services, indicated that it would be essential to involve regionally-based agencies and service providers in the design, implementation and future evaluation of current and future youth entrepreneurship programs and services. Such input would help ensure that proposed policy direction and/or new programs and services would complement and enhance current programs and services developed in various regions of the province.

Regional service providers also noted that it was important to enhance the co-ordination of services provided to youth by federal, provincial and non-profit agencies at the community level. Several organizations stated that sufficient resources needed to be made available to support such a position on a long-term basis.

In the reorganization of youth entrepreneurship programs and services, it is important to build on current infrastructure rather than create new structures. Many key stakeholders interviewed suggested that youth entrepreneurship programs and services develop stronger partnerships with youth employment facilities currently located in community-based centres, colleges and universities, as well as other community training agencies including those in the non-profit and private sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2-1 Provide a higher profile and a mechanism for policy direction for youth entrepreneurship in BC -- to that end, establish a provincial council, with high level representation from the various government agencies and private sector organizations involved in youth entrepreneurship.

Such a council or committee should include senior representatives from:

- ☐ BC government (Ministry of Small Business, Tourism & Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology);
- ☐ Federal government (Western Economic Diversification, Industry Canada - Aboriginal Business Canada, Human Resources Development Canada);
- ☐ Non-profit organizations (Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF));
- ☐ Private sector companies and financial institutions;
- ☐ Public and private training institutions;
- ☐ Young entrepreneurs.

2-2 In addition to a provincial co-ordinating structure, additional resources should be provided for building appropriate community councils or committees. These organizations (i.e., Local Entrepreneurship Management Councils) would contribute input to the provincial council and foster a more co-ordinated community approach in the provision of programs and services to young entrepreneurs in BC communities in every region. Goals of these councils/committees should include information sharing (both with the provincial Council and laterally), advocacy, identification of "best practices" and development of new pilot programs and services.

2-3 Funding should be made available to support the establishment of regional "Youth Entrepreneurship Co-ordinators" who would co-ordinate the delivery of federal, provincial and non-profit programs at the regional or community level. Funding for this position should be allocated on a long-term basis (e.g., 3 years) to help ensure the stability of program co-ordination at the community level.

RECOMMENDATIONS (cont'd):

2-4 Ensure that youth are represented in all groups working to build programming and/or service delivery in the area of youth entrepreneurship. Youth should be members of both the provincial and community councils.

2-5 Identify communication vehicles (e.g., Internet site) to facilitate communication between regional council members within communities and between communities.

2-6 Develop formal partnerships between federal (e.g., HRDC-funded) and provincial (e.g., YouBET!) programs using clear goals and objectives which can be translated into more co-ordinated service delivery at the local level.

Issue #3: Access to and Awareness of Programs/Services

In most areas of the province, youth are perceived to be unaware of the programs and services available to support them in pursuing entrepreneurship. Although, there are multiple access points for young people to acquire training, there is limited consolidation of services. Youth can, therefore, become confused as to contacts in their communities. This issue is less about poor marketing than it is about a lack of co-ordination and leadership in current programs and services. It is not easy to access information about entrepreneurship from a central source. Only by talking to nearly a hundred service providers and stakeholders and through many hours of research did the Consultant gain a sense of the entrepreneurship programs and services available in BC. How much more difficult it must be for youth, many of whom lack networking or Internet access, to access programs appropriate to their needs.

Youth entrepreneurship programs need *"more advertising. I only found out about it by accident on the web."*

Young Entrepreneur

Youth respondents feel the solution to lack of awareness is to market programs effectively. Almost one-half of the youth who provided recommendations to improve access and awareness of entrepreneurial programs suggested the need for increased advertising, and many of those thought that the educational system (K-12 and post-secondary) would be a good vehicle for improving awareness of community entrepreneurship programs. However, many service providers reported that the promotion of their program or service is getting lost in the marketing of other, similar programs. The result can be frustration on the part of service providers and confusion among young people seeking assistance.

"The public library has been doing some good work with internet training and having more information on starting your own business."

Young Entrepreneur

Any marketing campaigns designed to increase the awareness of programs or services must be relevant to youth and tailored to the circumstances of the community. For instance, some stakeholders suggested the word "youth" be avoided in marketing campaigns, so those in the 25-30 age group (who may not think of themselves as "youth") can be accommodated. As well, some programs have recently had success with promotional campaigns using non-conventional venues to advertise, such as signage in

pubs and radio ads. Many of the youth surveyed suggested that advertising on the radio would be a good method of increasing awareness. The active involvement of local youth at all levels of program design, including marketing/promotion and service delivery will be helpful in enhancing awareness of available services.

"If there was a local business centre in every community for young entrepreneurs, I think it would encourage young people to try to be self-employed."

Young Entrepreneur

In the survey of youth entrepreneurs, individuals were asked how they learned about the entrepreneurship program or service they had accessed. More than 40% of respondents cited word of mouth, and approximately one-fifth cited newspaper advertisements as the source of program information. Youth, service providers and stakeholders all recognized the need for a single location or resource where youth can access information about available, local entrepreneurial programs and services. This could be a one-stop shop for information in the form of a physical location, an information book, and/or a website. Approximately 75% of the youth who participated in the survey indicated that it was "very important" that services become better coordinated in order to provide a "one-stop shop".

Youth also noted the importance of having a "coach" or counselor that could assist them in the identification of appropriate information, services and/or other issues. Youth often expressed frustration that they were often "not taken seriously" and often told to go to another agency when they approached private and public sector institutions for information and/or assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

3-1 Establish a "one-stop shop" for information and services to support youth entrepreneurship:

- ☐ This new or enhanced service could be "virtual", or could include the creation of Youth Business Centres. Again, there is no need at this time to create a new infrastructure for this "one-stop shop". Instead, such a service may take advantage of resources and structures which already exist (e.g., Canada/ British Columbia Business Service Centre satellite centres, Community Future Development Corporations (CFDCs), youth employment centres). In this way, physical space, human resources and/or marketing strategies could be shared within each community. Entrepreneurship would, therefore, be presented as a component of existing centres which have established a helping relationship with young people in that community.
- ☐ Consider the development/publication of a directory of youth entrepreneurship programs and services that could provide a full listing of federal, provincial and local programs and services available to support youth entrepreneurship.
- ☐ If utilizing existing structures (e.g., CFDCs), some recognition must be made for youth to enhance access to such centres at times convenient to youth. Many youth noted that as they often had other responsibilities (e.g., school, work, etc.), some service should be made available during the evenings and/or weekends.

3-2 Organizations that provide several services, including services that target youth entrepreneurship (i.e., CFDCs, HRDC, Government Agents offices etc.) should establish youth entrepreneur "specialists" who are aware of the range of services available to young entrepreneurs and who are comfortable in dealing with youth.

Issue #4: The Role of the Education System

The education system *"...needs to begin to embrace activities outside of purely academic pursuits."*

Career Programs Consultant

Schools are perceived as failing to present self-employment as a viable career option. However, this could be the most accessible method by which BC's youth could be introduced to entrepreneurship as a potential career goal. Effective use of the educational system could also ensure that the maximum number of youth are familiar with the concept of entrepreneurship.

The education system has made some strides in addressing youth entrepreneurship. For example, two years ago, the Ministry of Education introduced Entrepreneurship 12 as a curriculum elective, and the Ministry funds Career Programs (CP) which may include "entrepreneurship". It should be noted, however, that there is only limited enrollment in Entrepreneurship 12 (852 students in 1998/99), and only 35 schools offered Entrepreneurship as a Career program. Rather than seeing it as an important part of the Career & Personal Planning (CAPP) curriculum, schools are left to include an entrepreneurship component into their lessons. Much of this decision seems to depend on the motivation and interest of teachers and school administrators. As a result, many schools do not offer Entrepreneurship 12 and/or Entrepreneurship as a Career Program.

"In [high] school they only talk about college and what type of job you are supposed to obtain. I feel that more kids would look into entrepreneurship if the idea occurred to them."

Young Entrepreneur

The potential to develop entrepreneurship in grades K-12 by encouraging students to consider self-employment as a career option was a key theme in stakeholder and service provider interviews as well as in the youth survey. For instance, most service providers felt that high school, or even elementary school, is the place to introduce the idea of entrepreneurship. Slightly more than two-thirds of those youth surveyed indicated that it is "very important" to provide better education programs in schools and colleges.

The role and importance of the education system provoked considerable dialogue in the focus groups and roundtable discussions. Numerous youth, service providers and stakeholders identified several roles for the education system, including:

- building an awareness of the concept of entrepreneurship among youth. This would require that teachers, counsellors, librarians and parents become more knowledgeable about entrepreneurship in general, and about possible "routes" to self-employment that students could take;
- developing foundation skills that would support entrepreneurship well after students had left the school system. Such foundation skills could include "applied" courses offered at an early grade (e.g., Junior Achievement programs) to problem-solving/critical thinking activities that could be incorporated in a variety of courses. Many stakeholders noted that entrepreneurial courses/examples should be incorporated into the curriculum of several subject areas;
- providing youth with access to entrepreneurship programs and courses that could either facilitate their progression into entrepreneurial programs offered in the private or public post-secondary education system and/or participation in youth entrepreneurship training programs.

Schools are also alleged to have only limited linkages between the K-12 education and post-secondary systems and other organizations that provide training. In a focus group, service providers indicated the need for an educational system of K-16 that would integrate high school and post-secondary programs to provide a continuum of entrepreneurship courses. For example, one-fifth of service providers said schools need to enhance their partnerships and/or communication with service providers and the business community.

"Let [the schools] know that we are a lot more powerful working together . . . They need to come together and make things fly. Just do it."

General Manager, CFDC Region

It was also noted that very few schools/school districts had developed articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions, whereby students who had completed Entrepreneurship 12 and/or participated in an entrepreneurship career program would gain advanced standing and/or earn transferable credits towards business, marketing and/or entrepreneurial programs offered at the post-secondary level. Developing such agreements could provide youth with additional

motivations in choosing entrepreneurial classes/programs in the K-12 system.

"It is easier and cheaper for a college to add seats to an existing business program rather than to try to create a new 'entrepreneur-ship program'."

Key Stakeholder

Additionally, it was noted that there were few entrepreneurship programs offered in BC post-secondary institutions. Several stakeholders noted that due to the specialized nature of entrepreneurship as a program, it would be costly for institutions to design and implement such programs. Finding suitable instructors with an appropriate mix of instructional and entrepreneurial qualifications was also seen as problematic.

Where Entrepreneurship 12 is offered, its structure does not always maximize benefits for students. For instance, while high schools in some communities have welcomed service providers from training programs into their classes for presentations or networking, most have not. The potential of Entrepreneurship 12 classes to provide "real world" examples to be used for skill development is not being utilized.

Given the increased emphasis on youth entrepreneurship education and training, it is essential that educators and trainers have access to leading edge concepts and successful practices associated with youth entrepreneurship. A "Centre for Excellence" was identified as one possible structure to serve as a focal point for the design and development of entrepreneurship programs and services. Individuals noted, however, that such a centre should serve both the public and private education and training sector, and needed to operate on an entrepreneurial basis – stakeholders did not want such a centre to become an abstract academic institution with limited ties to delivery of entrepreneurial programs by private and public sector organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

4-1 Provide entrepreneurship exposure to youth at an earlier age, and allow school districts/schools to be responsible for delivery:

- ☐ Recognize Junior Achievement as a potential model for constructing elementary and secondary curriculum;
- ☐ School districts/classrooms should incorporate entrepreneurial-type activities into the current curricula.

4-2 Build an awareness of self-employment as a career alternative by including a mandatory overview of entrepreneurship in Applied Skills (Grade 8-10) and/or the CAPP curriculum:

- ☐ School District #24 (Kamloops) has developed an excellent supplement to the CAPP curriculum called "Self: A Suitcase of Skills – Building an Entrepreneurial Attitude" which includes a Grade 9 journal assignment titled "Into the Spider's Web: The Evolution of a Young Entrepreneur." Other school districts across the province could benefit from the dissemination of these and similar materials;
- ☐ Encourage teachers and school administrators to support entrepreneurship experiences, incorporating them into this overview by having service providers from training programs and/or young entrepreneurs as role models, to present their knowledge and experience to classes.

4-3 Encourage the Ministry of Education to assume a leadership role in reviewing and modifying existing curriculum to involve more entrepreneurial issues, or identifying new resources, as required:

- ☐ Appropriate resource kits should be prepared and distributed to teachers, librarians and counsellors.

4-4 Encourage business education Provincial Specialists Association (PSA) to identify resources and training requirements (professional development programs) needed to better support entrepreneurial education.

RECOMMENDATIONS (cont'd):

4-5 Assist teachers in their ability to offer Entrepreneurship 12 by establishing formal provincial and regional links between the Ministries of Education and Small Business, Tourism and Culture regarding the delivery of youth entrepreneurship programming:

- ☐ Entrepreneurship 12 and the YouBET! program could benefit by sharing lesson plans and networks so that successful young entrepreneurs in local communities can be identified and asked to participate in either or both programs as speakers or mentors.

4-6 Support the transition process for youth in educational streams (either secondary or post-secondary) which include participation in entrepreneurial programs (Entrepreneurship 12, Entrepreneur Career Programs) to allow them access to or advanced standing in business/self-employment programs offered in post-secondary institutions:

- ☐ Entrepreneurship 12 and/or participation in Entrepreneurship Career Programs could be recognized for credit and/or advanced standing in post-secondary institutions entrepreneurship and/or business programs.

4-7 The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology should provide seed/start-up funding to assist in developing post-secondary youth entrepreneurship programs in BC post-secondary institutions.

4-8 The Ministries of Education, Advanced Education, Training and Technology and Small Business, Tourism and Culture should evaluate the feasibility of funding a "Centre for Excellence" focusing on Entrepreneurship Education and Development:

- ☐ Nova Scotia has established a Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED) which focuses on the development of curriculum and materials in support of entrepreneurship.

Issue #5: Gaps in Service Delivery

A key concern of the YED Partnership is whether and where gaps in Youth Entrepreneurship program and service provision exist. Four main gaps were identified through the research conducted: lack of access to start-up funds, lack of follow-up or post-start-up support, limited capacity/availability of qualified trainers and program eligibility.

Start-up Funding

Service providers see the accessibility of start-up funds as a major gap. As most youth often lack assets and practical business skills, many banks do not perceive youth as an acceptable credit risk. Young entrepreneurs felt that banks "don't like" young people and will not approve business plans that are "slightly different [or] left-wing". A significant number of service providers suggested the promotion of micro-lending, typically available through CFDCs, as an alternative to conventional bank loans.

"Either there needs to be more accessible financing for young entrepreneurs or the programs offered should cover the financing opportunities available."

Young Entrepreneur

While slightly more than one-third of youth surveyed reported that they were able to secure financial assistance in their community, a similar proportion indicated that they were unable to find financial assistance. Some of the comments made by the youth indicated more of a need for knowing where and/or how to access funding and the different financing options available.

Funding can be a significant obstacle to Aboriginal youth, who may encounter racial prejudice in addition to youth bias. While there are funding programs which cater specifically to Aboriginal clients (Canadian Bankers Association's Entrepreneurial Spirit program, Aboriginal Business Canada, First Citizen Fund, Aboriginal Capital Corporations), there is still a perception among some Aboriginal service providers that accessing start-up funds is a barrier for Aboriginal youth. For example, one Aboriginal service provider asked, "What kind of bank is going to give a First Nations youth $15,000 to start their own business?".

Several stakeholders noted that it was important for lending institutions to become more knowledgeable in the area of

researching and funding youth business ventures. It was noted that in general, lenders often lacked the experience or training in underwriting micro business ventures that are often characteristic of many youth start-up companies. Youth and stakeholders noted that lenders needed to develop a new set of lending rules and requirements that could better serve young entrepreneurs.

Many of the youth surveyed in this study also noted that while many non-conventional lenders such as CFDCs and the Canadian Youth Business Federation (CYBF) had funds available, it took considerably longer to access such funds than would be the case for commercial lending institutions. Youth noted that in some cases it took 60 to 90 days to find out whether they would qualify for a loan – which was in stark contrast to the 24 to 48 hour turnaround for commercial loans offered by most banks and credit unions.

Follow-up/Post-Start-up Support

"It is very difficult to deal with and maintain the growth of your company once it is running and there is not a lot of support out there to help."

Young Entrepreneur

Limited post-training assistance and support is available to guide and encourage the post-start-up activities of young entrepreneurs. Most current programs and services focus on the skills and resources needed to engage in market research and begin business development. However, follow-up is needed for those young people who have recently finished training programs, or for those who are already engaged in business. One youth thought that other skills such as "bookkeeping, advertising, and budgeting" would be useful in the post-start-up phase.

A major concern among service providers is the lack of aftercare provincial and federal programs provide to young entrepreneurs. In some cases, participants are left feeling "What now?" after completing a program provided by an outside contractor. In focus group discussions with service providers, it was suggested that the type and level of post-start-up support that is required should be researched and that programs should be flexible so that youth can access services when needed.

"A mentor is like . . . a cheerleader in your corner."

Young Entrepreneur

The lack of widespread and effective mentorship programming (supported by members of the private sector) is seen as a

particular gap in follow-up services. For example, mentoring would be helpful for young entrepreneurs who are considering expanding their business or taking on employees. However, in some communities there may be a shortage of qualified mentors, particularly youth mentors. Youth, service providers and key stakeholders agree on the importance of mentoring to the development and maintenance of successful entrepreneurial enterprises.

"Peers would have a greater influence, ability to relate, and be able to communicate effectively."

Young Entrepreneur

The lack of opportunities for young entrepreneurs to network with one another (outside of a specified program) was identified in interviews as a significant gap in current services. Such networking could be part of follow-up to a program or service, or it may appeal to those youth who have never accessed a program.

"There needs to be . . . a continued support system so that young entrepreneurs can support each other as well as new young entrepreneurs."

Young Entrepreneur

Again, organizations (like the Young Entrepreneurs Association) currently exist which could help facilitate increased networking among youth. However, many programs and services appear to have poorly defined links with YEA and other organizations that may have a presence in the community. For example, in the environmental scan of youth entrepreneurship programs in BC, two organizations were identified as providing aftercare support. The lack of aftercare support is particularly acute in non-urban areas, as the above organizations were located in Victoria and the Lower Mainland.

Limited Capacity/Availability of Qualified Trainers

Several roundtable participants noted that in addition to building mentoring capacity, an effective youth entrepreneurship strategy would require additional qualified trainers to deliver the required programs. As defined in this *Strategy*, if the role of the trainer is defined to include a range of activities – including service delivery, after service support and industry brokering – there may be a requirement to enhance the capacity/skills of trainers in these areas. The lack of qualified trainers was seen as particularly problematic in rural/northern regions as well as in the Aboriginal community.

"Youth should be given equal opportunities. You have to be 18 or 21 to receive grants or loans, and to go to the programs held in our community, you have to have been on EI."

Young Entrepreneur

Restrictions on Program Eligibility

While some programs (e.g., YouBET!) placed few restrictions on youth to demonstrate eligibility for training, many others are designed to reach only one particular group – usually young people on social assistance and/or employment insurance. In some communities, youth who are not receiving (or are not eligible for) Employment Insurance or Income Assistance have significantly fewer options for education/training in entrepreneurship. This policy is questionable, considering many youth have yet to establish a work history in order to be eligible for Employment Insurance.

While some federal programs (e.g., Youth Initiatives) are open to all youth, other federal programs (e.g., some HRDC employment programs) specifically target EI recipients. In this context, it is important that service delivery agencies are knowledgeable about referring youth who are not EI/IA eligible to appropriate other federal and/or provincial programs.

There was a perception among some non-EI/IA eligible and non-Aboriginal youth that it was difficult for them to obtain funding, because available programs target EI/IA-eligible or Aboriginal youth. These youth respondents suggested that, although it is important to provide encouragement and opportunities to marginalized groups, it is also important not to create new barriers in place of old ones. Everyone must be included equally in programming decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

5-1 Ensure that contracts for the delivery of current training programs include follow-up (in the form of one-to-one business counseling, mentoring or periodic group meetings) for young people at least six months to a year after business start-up. Sufficient resources must be provided for this follow-up:

- ☐ A partnership between programs and the Young Entrepreneurs Association (or similar organizations) would be useful in facilitating the efforts of young people to network and share experiences once training is complete and their business ongoing.

5-2 Ensure service delivery agencies have adequate information to refer youth to appropriate programs:

- ☐ Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) funds a variety of youth and non-youth-specific entrepreneurship and self-employment programs. While programs offered through Youth Initiatives are geared to all youth, many self-employment programs offered through HRDC are available only to EI/IA eligible clients. In this context, it is important that HRDC service providers who specialize in EI/IA eligible self-employment programs are made aware of the opportunities for non-EI-eligible youth. Such agencies should make efforts to facilitate the referral of non-EI-eligible youth to appropriate federal (Youth Initiatives) or provincial (YouBET!) programs.
- ☐ Local Human Resources Development Canada Centres (HRCCs) should work with community entrepreneurship councils in completing needs assessments for the communities in which they operate. Such collaboration would help reduce overlap in service delivery as well as provide an avenue to ensure some entrepreneurship programs and services are available to both EI-eligible and non-EI-eligible youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS (cont'd):

5-3 Enhance mentorship opportunities:

- ☐ Encourage the involvement of young, successful entrepreneurs to become mentors for their peers;
- ☐ Currently, there may be only limited opportunities for members of the private sector to help others. The active participation of young people who have managed to establish a successful business may help new entrepreneurs to network and make connections as well as receive concrete, relevant advice;
- ☐ Capacity building for mentors is needed. Training programs should be offered which enhance mentors' awareness of the unique attributes of youth clients.

5-4 Enhance training/professional development for trainers/lending officers:

- ☐ Training/professional development activities should be developed that would enhance the ability of service providers to provide after-service support to youth to assist in business start-up or post-start-up activities;
- ☐ Training programs should be developed that would enhance lending officers awareness/understanding of youth business and young entrepreneurs.

5-5 Consider establishing a youth entrepreneur incubation centre on a pilot basis. This incubator would enhance networking and "real-world" business opportunities and should include follow-up support. Review the BCIT Venture Program as a model.

5-6 Provide funding or pay tuition/fees of youth seeking to attend trade shows which would serve to "showcase" youth business, particularly for rural and Aboriginal youth who may have difficulty in accessing larger markets.

Issue #6: Establishment of Sectoral Partnerships

By definition, entrepreneurship entails risk-taking, in that an entrepreneur will identify a perceived business need, develop the goods or services to meet this need, and market the developed product or service to the buyer whether it be business, government or consumers. In this process, the entrepreneur is faced with several challenges that will affect the ultimate viability of the proposed business or service.

Lack of knowledge of industry requirements or industry "processes" was seen as a challenge to young entrepreneurs.

A significant barrier experienced by entrepreneurs – especially young entrepreneurs – is often that they lack experience in, or knowledge of, their targeted industry or market, despite having good business ideas and the ability to design and deliver specific goods or services.

Through the consultation process, it was noted that the risks faced by young entrepreneurs could be reduced if youth had a better understanding of market/industry requirements, business practices and procedures. The inability to "plug in" was seen as a significant constraint to the long-term viability of many youth businesses.

"Sectoral partnerships" could provide benefits to both industry and young entrepreneurs.

Several individuals cited the need to try to build "partnerships" with those industries/sectors that could particularly benefit from the services offered by young entrepreneurs. Cultivating such partnerships was seen as having several benefits: it would allow industry to better explain needs requirements and opportunities, it would provide youth and service providers with potential markets, and the partnerships could enhance opportunities for youth to market developed products/services once they had established their business.

Currently, the YouBET! Program involves several industry sectors in the design and delivery of youth entrepreneurship training programs, including:

- the local film industry,
- an eco-tourism association, and
- an art school.

"Matching" of youth with industry requirements was seen as a way of enhancing the successful start-up of youth businesses.

Sectoral partnerships offer a mechanism whereby industry could play a more proactive role in the identification of business requirements for young entrepreneurs. "Matching" of youth with industry requirements was seen as one way of enhancing the successful start-up of youth businesses. Similarly, it was thought that industry could play a more proactive role in the identification of business requirements for young entrepreneurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

6-1 The design of programs should incorporate "sectoral partnerships" between industry and youth. A component of service delivery should include potential "brokering" services between industry and youth.

- ☐ Sectoral partnerships developed by the YouBET! Program could serve as a model.

Issue #7: Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurs

Recognizing the high unemployment rates among Aboriginal youth and the often limited employment opportunities for many Aboriginal youth, a key element of the Strategy was to identify and define specific activities/policies that could enhance participation of Aboriginal youth in starting their own businesses.

The *Strategy* included significant consultation with the Aboriginal community

To this end, there was extensive consultation with Aboriginal youth, service providers and advocacy agencies. For example, 40 of the 279 (14%) youth surveyed were of Aboriginal descent and approximately 20 Aboriginal service providers/key informants were also interviewed.

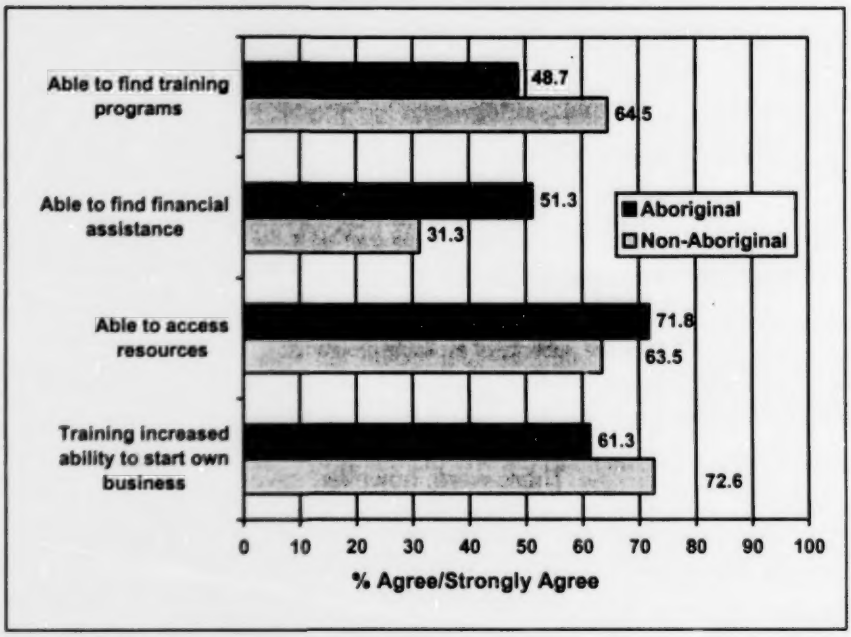
Overall, while most stakeholders surveyed felt that Aboriginal youth should receive the same instruction as non-Aboriginal youth, it was noted that Aboriginal youth often faced several challenges that would need to be addressed in terms of delivering effective programs and services. In this context, it was felt that programs that targeted Aboriginal youth would need to be tailored to maximize the participation of youth in such programs as well as to ensure that the training services provided are relevant to Aboriginal youth participants.

. . . Aboriginal youth, while sharing many of the concerns and issues of non-Aboriginal young entrepreneurs, also noted other problems that they faced in trying to start their own business . . .

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth were surveyed to ascertain perceptions with respect to adequacy/appropriateness of training programs, financial assistance and other resources.

A key finding of the study suggests that Aboriginal youth/service providers and non-Aboriginal youth/service providers share many of the same perceptions with respect to issues associated with a youth entrepreneurship strategy. For example, as highlighted in Chart 3 (see next page), opinions/experiences of Aboriginal youth surveyed were similar to that of non-Aboriginal youth for a number of issues.

Chart 3
Opinions About Selected Entrepreneurship Issues
Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Youth



n = 40 Aboriginal, 230 non-Aboriginal youth

As highlighted in Chart 3, in comparison to non-Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal clients were more critical of their ability to find appropriate training programs than were non-Aboriginal youth. This could reflect the geographic "remoteness" of many of the communities in which Aboriginal youth reside, and/or that Aboriginal youth cannot find or access such training programs on-reserve in these areas. In contrast, Aboriginal youth were much more positive about their access to capital than were non-Aboriginal youth, as many Aboriginal youth noted that they had access to several funding programs.

Aboriginal youth surveyed held similar opinions as non-Aboriginal youth with respect to proposed key elements of a B.C. youth entrepreneurship strategy

As detailed in Table 1, Aboriginal youth generally attached the same importance to suggested elements that should be included in a potential youth entrepreneurship strategy. For example, more than 85% of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth noted that it would be very/somewhat important for the strategy to increase support for the start-up phase of business, to make it easier to get business training, to increase the publicity of available programs, to enhance the co-ordination of services and to enhance the availability of post-school training programs.

Table 1
Opinions as to the Importance of the
Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy to Include Selected Elements
Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Youth
(Top 5 Issues)

	% Somewhat/Very Important	
Issue	**Aboriginal Youth**	**Non-Aboriginal Youth**
Provide more support for the start-up phase of business	95.0%	98.3%
Better post-school training programs	95.0%	93.7%
Make it easier to get business financing	92.5%	86.6%
Increase publicity of available programs	92.5%	95.8%
Better co-ordination of services/"one-stop shop"	90.0%	96.3%

n = 40 Aboriginal and 239 non-Aboriginal youth

"First Nations youth come to the table with a different set of skills."

General Manager, CFDC Region

There were, however, several areas in which Aboriginal youth were felt to require additional and/or specialized services. For example, unlike other specific groups, Aboriginal youth were deemed to require services that incorporate cultural perspectives, involve the guidance of elders, and encourage individual self-esteem and community capacity building. The social issues and lack of resources on reserves cannot be separated from entrepreneurship programming. Two interrelated obstacles are "[lack of] confidence and social stereotyping". As a result, they often need support and guidance to "increase assurance and personal power".

"Most Aboriginal youth haven't been exposed to the world of entrepreneurship"

Enterprise Facilitator

In the first place, Aboriginal youth, especially those on reserves, may face more obstacles to developing an "entrepreneurial attitude" than other age peers. A significant number of on-reserve Aboriginal stakeholders and service providers discussed the need to instill a sense of self-sufficiency as a key characteristic of entrepreneurs. Aboriginal youth must often work harder than other youth to develop the skills and confidence necessary for the "entrepreneurial attitude". As one service provider stated, "start before the business concept with capacity building [and] take into account environmental factors".

Many participants suggested that programs geared to Aboriginal youth be provided by or in collaboration with the local

community or band. Analysis of the youth survey data suggests that Aboriginal youth have not participated in entrepreneurship training programs to the same extent as non-Aboriginal youth[2]. In this context, it would be important to enhance Aboriginal youth access to such programs and services. Sectoral partnerships with Aboriginal organizations should be actively encouraged so the program achieves a high level of trust with the young members of the community. Any new programming could be delivered through an existing Aboriginal employment program or centre. However, the core content of the programs should not be altered from that used in non-Aboriginal communities.

Programs "need to be culturally sensitive; specially designed for the culture."

Program Executive Director

It is also important that information that is relevant to Aboriginal youth is provided. For instance, one service provider mentioned that YouBET! is offered in Aboriginal communities, but does not instruct participants on the unique tax structures available to Aboriginal businesses under Revenue Canada. Similarly, restrictions of the use of assets to secure loans for on-reserve business ventures can be a barrier in terms of securing financing from commercial lending institutions. In other words, the participation of the community in the design and delivery of programs is essential, as the community knows the requirements and or special circumstances of its members. Again, it is not necessary to create new infrastructure to meet the needs of young entrepreneurs.

". . . there are so few of us in business, it would be good for us to be able to get together to talk about problems, issues and share our ideas . . ."

Aboriginal young entrepreneur

Aboriginal youth also reported a lack of follow-up support after they had started their business. While a higher proportion of Aboriginal youth (40%) relative to non-Aboriginal youth (35%) reported that they had benefited from a funding program to support their business, only a low proportion (10%) of Aboriginal youth reported that they had accessed any follow-up services in support of their business. In contrast, almost one-third (32%) of non-Aboriginal youth surveyed indicated that they had received post-start-up support/services[3]. Furthermore, while almost

[2] While 59.7% of non-Aboriginal youth surveyed reported that they had participated in an entrepreneurial training program, only 40.0% of Aboriginal youth indicated that they had participated in such programs.
[3] It was noted that "after-care" was an integral element of many of the funding programs available to Aboriginal entrepreneurs. In the focus group discussions, some Aboriginal youth felt that such services were seen to be more of an audit/accountability function than a business counselling/mentoring service.

three-quarters (72%) of non-Aboriginal youth noted that they had the opportunity to network with other young entrepreneurs, less than one-half (49%) of Aboriginal entrepreneurs expressed a similar opinion. Many Aboriginal youth indicated that it would be good to establish a network of Aboriginal youth entrepreneurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

7-1 Both federal and provincial agencies should consider the development of training modules/resources that specifically target Aboriginal youth entrepreneurship:

- ☐ Efforts should be made to establish an inventory of existing Aboriginal youth entrepreneurship training modules/resources and to identify what resources/modules could serve as a basis for broader distribution across the Province.

7-2 Improve standards to ensure that there are reasonably equitable levels of service across BC, in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. This could entail more training programs conducted on Reserves and/or contracting with Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agencies (AHRDAs) to develop youth entrepreneurship training programs.

7-3 Local Entrepreneurship Management Councils should include participation from Aboriginal advocacy groups to ensure that developed programs and services meet the needs of Aboriginal youth who reside both on- and off-reserve.

7-4 Facilitate the establishment of mentoring capacity building programs (as part of existing programs and services) in Aboriginal communities using the wisdom and knowledge of elders.

7-5 Encourage the establishment/start-up of an Aboriginal chapter of the Young Entrepreneurship Association (YEA) or a stand-alone support group for Aboriginal young entrepreneurs.

Issue #8: Specialized Services for Specific Groups of Youth

"Address the anticipated needs of these groups when developing initiatives, but don't offer programs in a segregated fashion."

Career Education Co-ordinator

Few stakeholders and service providers felt that specialized programs, in terms of program content, were needed for visible minority youth, youth with special needs/disabilities or youth at risk. Many mentioned that all young people, regardless of circumstance, have to compete in the same marketplace, and so could benefit most from learning about business together in one group. It was suggested that special needs individuals be accommodated through a tailored delivery of the service, within the framework of current mainstream programming.

To provide service to all these specialized groups effectively, program delivery must be accessible and inclusive. Individuals with special needs can require added supports and flexibility to complete entrepreneurship programs, or apply for financial assistance to set up their businesses.

Program delivery should be structured to accommodate need. For instance, youth with disabilities may require special aids. As well, service providers dealing with at-risk youth may need to facilitate referrals to additional services, such as personal counselling, before entrepreneurship training can be continued. Stakeholders and service providers also noted that the at-risk population had special requirements such as delivery of services on an after-hours basis, and the ability to participate in a series of short courses rather than long, intensive programming.

Key stakeholders and service providers did not feel it necessary to provide special programming for visible minority youth, except when there are language barriers. Similarly, it was noted that for some groups (e.g., women in ethnic minority groups), special programs should be considered to enhance participation of such individuals in youth entrepreneurship programs.

It was noted that service providers needed to work closely with respective advocacy agencies to ensure that programs and services offered would accommodate the needs of the disabled, visible minorities and special needs or "at risk" youth. It was

suggested that the local Entrepreneurship Management Councils encourage the participation of representatives from multicultural organizations as well as agencies that deliver services to individuals with a disability to ensure that special needs youth have access to appropriate programs and services.

Services for Rural Youth

Many service providers agreed rural youth need services that consider the remoteness of the communities and the size of their potential market. Several rural-based organizations have had success with niche-specific programs such as agri-food production. Rural stakeholders and service providers mention that the focus of programs should be on keeping young people in the community. Although the potential to develop on-line businesses is strong, most service providers feel it is important for youth to participate in the local economy.

"There are very specific kinds of opportunities in non-urban settings."

Financial Services Representative, Community Futures

Equally important is the need to ensure access to programs. Some rural service providers operate a mobile business centre that visits remote clients directly. Others provide funding (e.g., pay for transportation costs) to entrepreneurs seeking to attend programs in larger centres. Another potential vehicle for service delivery in rural communities could be generated through recognizing the skills and interests inherent in the community. Often, a local businessperson will have the skills and desire to host entrepreneurship programs.

"Maybe there needs to be an on-line mentor and [quarterly] meeting where there is face-to-face contact"

Independent Service Provider

Rural youth might need to take more advantage of on-line programming, especially if there are not enough young people in their communities to run a face-to-face program. However, lack of access to computers or the Internet may be a considerable barrier in some regions. Several service providers also noted that remote youth often lacked access to high speed internet services that were available in larger centres. Therefore, a mix of on-line and face-to-face service delivery may work best for rural youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

8-1 Local Entrepreneurship Management Councils should include participation from advocacy groups to ensure that developed programs and services meet the needs of the disabled and/or visible minorities or other equity groups (i.e., "at risk" youth, etc.).

8-2 Bolster on-line programming and promotion of programs to increase access to services for young entrepreneurs living in rural areas:

- ☐ The development of entrepreneurship in rural areas may be particularly important, given the current struggle of many communities to diversify their economies;
- ☐ Rural youth should be given opportunities to meet periodically with trainers and other young entrepreneurs in person.

8-3 Provide allowances or stipends to allow rural, isolated or disadvantaged youth to attend training or networking sessions that they might otherwise be unable to attend.

8-4 Consider funding for aspiring entrepreneurs and start-up companies in rural/remote areas to participate in trade shows.

Summary

The results of this study suggest that there is considerable efforts underway to provide youth with the opportunity to more fully participate in BC's economic growth via self-employment and/or entrepreneurial ventures. However, in completing this research, it also became clear that BC youth could benefit from a "strategy" that addressed current gaps and shortcomings with respect to the design, delivery and co-ordination of youth entrepreneurship programs and services.

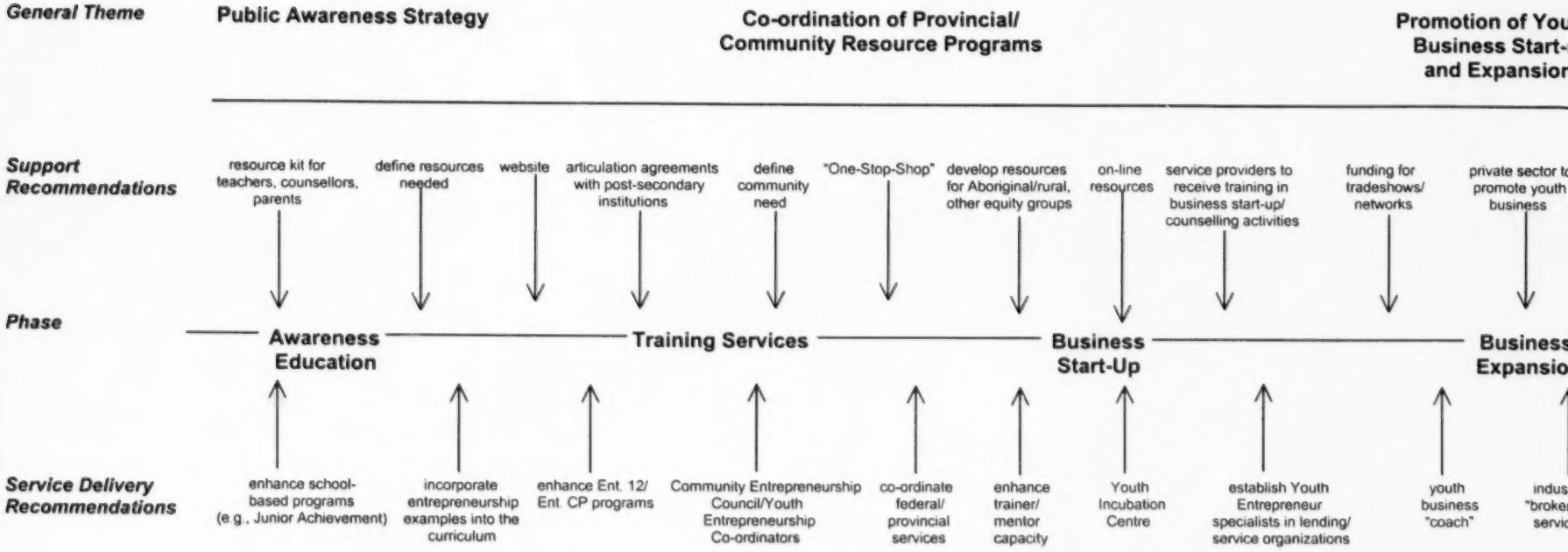
. . . the *Strategy* contains more than 30 recommendations that could be implemented in the short to medium term . . .

The developed strategy presented in this document includes more than 30 major recommendations designed to enhance the current delivery of youth entrepreneurship programs and services. Given the mandate for the *Strategy* to provide recommendations that could be implemented in the short to medium term (next one to three years), the *Strategy* has not incorporated recommendations or activities that would require a considerably longer period to implement. In this context, the *Strategy* has not encompassed several changes that, while of potentially significant impact, were deemed to be too difficult to implement in the short term. For example, the *Strategy* does not include recommendations associated with changes to federal/provincial tax regulations (e.g., tax holiday for new businesses, provisions to enhance youth access to venture capital, etc.). Similarly, the *Strategy* has not incorporated recommendations that would require formal negotiations between the federal and provincial governments (e.g., Labour Market Development Agreement).

. . . the *Strategy* has focused on "doable" activities and recommendations . . .

The *Strategy* does, however, focus on enhancing youth entrepreneurship along a very broad continuum starting with awareness, education and orientation – and also includes services designed to provide assistance to youth in the post-start-up and business operation phases. Depicted in Figure 1 are some of the specific support and service delivery recommendations that have been defined in the *Strategy*, with identification as to how some recommendations could support youth entrepreneurship along the defined "continuum".

Figure 1
Proposed Activities to Support Youth Entrepreneurship


General Theme
Public Awareness Strategy
Co-ordination of Provincial/ Community Resource Programs
Promotion of You Business Start- and Expansion
Support Recommendations
resource kit for teachers, counsellors, parents
define resources needed
website
articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions
define community need
"One-Stop-Shop"
develop resources for Aboriginal/rural, other equity groups
on-line resources
service providers to receive training in business start-up/ counselling activities
funding for tradeshows/ networks
private sector to promote youth business
Phase
Awareness Education
Training Services
Business Start-Up
Business Expansio
Service Delivery Recommendations
enhance school-based programs (e.g., Junior Achievement)
incorporate entrepreneurship examples into the curriculum
enhance Ent. 12/ Ent. CP programs
Community Entrepreneurship Council/Youth Entrepreneurship Co-ordinators
co-ordinate federal/ provincial services
enhance trainer/ mentor capacity
Youth Incubation Centre
establish Youth Entrepreneur specialists in lending/ service organizations
youth business "coach"
indus "broke servic

Next Steps

. . . it is essential that this Strategy become a way of saying "Yes" and not a reason to say "No" to new concepts/ideas in the delivery of youth entrepreneurship programs and services . . .

Roundtable Participant

The development of the Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy, based on the contributions and input of hundreds of individuals, could serve as a catalyst for changing the way in which youth entrepreneurship programs are designed and implemented in British Columbia. Similarly, it should be emphasized that the *Strategy* represents a starting point for the design and delivery of a co-ordinated youth entrepreneurship strategy. While the *Strategy* has identified numerous changes to the delivery of current youth entrepreneurship programs and services, it is critical that the *Strategy* not be seen as a panacea for youth entrepreneurship in British Columbia. In fact, it is expected that this "blueprint" will be subject to change and modification as new and different challenges emerge with respect to the provision of programs and services to BC's young entrepreneurs.

Appendix A: Listing of Participating Agencies Involved with the Development of the BC Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy

1. Federal Government organizations

Business Development Bank of Canada
Human Resources Development Canada
Industry Canada – Aboriginal Business Canada
Western Economic Diversification Canada

2. Provincial Government organizations

Canada/BC Business Service Centre
Ministry of Advanced Education – Information Technology, Business and Hospitality Programs
Ministry of Education – Career Programs and Curriculum Branch
Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture – Small Business Branch

3. Aboriginal Financial Institutions/Aboriginal Economic Development Agencies

All Nations Trust Company
Burns Lake Native Development Corporation
Canum Lake Band Development
Esketemc First Nation Economic Development
Native Investment & Trade Association
Nuu-Chah-Nulth Economic Development Corporation
Tale-Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation

4. Non-profit organizations

Barriere Employment Centre
British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
Canadian Youth Business Foundation (several chapters)
Disability Resource Centre
Greater Victoria Economic Development Corporation
Innovation Resource Centre
Interior Indian Friendship Society
Junior Achievement
Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA
Kamloops Economic Development Corporation
Kiwanis Enterprise Centre
Kootenay Employment Services
Kootenay Region Metis Organization
Leadership and Management Development Council of B.C.
LifeCycles

Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation
Metis National Youth Advisory Council
Nanaimo Independent Living Society
Prince George Native Friendship Society
Prince George/Nechako Aboriginal Employment & Training Centre
Rotary International (Victoria Chapter)
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
South Peace Enterprise Centre Society
The Youth Network
United We Can
Victoria Business Improvement Association
Women's Enterprise Society
YES Canada
YMCA Employment Initiatives
YM-YWCA of Kelowna/Westbank
Young Entrepreneurs Association of BC

5. Private sector

BC Chamber of Commerce
Biskitz Bakery
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce
Empower Training Concepts (YouBET! contractor)
Horne Marr Zak
Kayla Consultants (YouBET! contractor)
Linda Naiman & Associates Inc.
Macrolink Administration Ltd. (YouBET! contractor)
Pacific Coast Savings
Pacific Training Innovations
People by Perrier (YouBET! contractor)
RIO! Crazy
SOHO Business Group
TriStar Innovations (YouBET! contractor)
VanCity Savings Credit Union

6. Community agencies

Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Boundary Area
CFDC Central Okanagan
CFDC Central Interior First Nations
CFDC Cowichan
CFDC Howe Sound
CFDC Nicola Valley
CFDC Nadina
CFDC Penticton
CFDC Powell River
CFDC Revelstoke
CFDC Thompson Country

CFDC Vernon
Creative Employment Access Courtenay
Municipality of Saanich
Nanaimo Youth Services Association
Nuxalk Indian Band

7. Educational Organizations

British Columbia Institute of Technology Venture Centre
College of New Caledonia
Langara College
Okanagan University College
Royal Roads University
Simon Fraser University – Business Faculty Career Advice
School District 5 (District Learning Centre) – Southeast Kootenays
School District 23 – Kelowna
School District 73 – Kamloops
University of Victoria